



Pay Campaign Special No. 1 • May 2002

# FIREFIGHTER

Professionals get  
professional **pay...**  
so we're demanding **£30K**

**Y**



Because we're **worth it!**

Pay parity means:

**£30K** for Emergency Fire Control Staff & Firefighters;  
A **£7,500** retainer, and **£13.74** for every hour worked  
by Firefighters on the Retained duty system.

## GENERAL SECRETARY

# ALL OUT FOR PAY JUSTICE

IF I HAD a fiver for every time I've heard politicians thanking firefighters for their bravery and professionalism I could retire tomorrow. But unsolicited testimonials at the scene of major disasters and life threatening incidents do not pay the mortgage. As they say, words come cheap.

In reality the politicians get a first class Fire Service while paying third class wages. Members of the public are genuinely shocked when they hear that a fully qualified firefighter is paid around £100 per week less than average male earnings. If it were left to the voters FBU members would be awarded an immediate and substantial pay rise.

The truth is that in recent years, firefighters' earnings have kept abreast of price rises and inflation while other groups have raced ahead. When the union signed up to the Pay Formula twenty five years ago it was a good deal following the only national strike in our history. It guaranteed rising earnings and linked us to the top earners among manual workers. But much has changed since 1977. Relatively speaking manual earnings have fallen back because the industrial and occupational structure has changed radically. Old industries have gone or are in decline. The craftsman has been replaced by the electronics engineer and skilled jobs are now done by computers. So the modern employer is looking for qualified engineers, technicians and computer programmers and this is reflected in comparative wage levels.

Much has also changed in the Fire Service. Firefighters have a broader range of responsibilities and higher levels of training. The Audit Commission reports excellent results and improved levels of productivity as the number of incidents grows while fire authorities continue to cut corners. Modernisation has occurred and is progressing thanks to FBU members. Now it's time for modernisation of Fire Service pay!

For all these reasons the Executive Committee, after considerable consultation at local level, has launched a Pay Campaign with the following objective.

- i An improvement in the basic pay for Firefighters to £30,000 by November 2002. Existing differentials across rank structures should continue to apply pending the outcome of the Rank Structure Review.
- ii As a trade union committed to equality and fair treatment for

ANDREW WARD/REPORT PHOTOS.COM



**Every brigade, every control room, every station, every watch has a part to play**

all members and in recognition of their pivotal role Emergency Fire Control Staff to receive the same wages as Firefighters of their equivalent rank.

- iii Firefighters working the Retained and Volunteer Duty Systems can be expected to do the same job as their Wholetime counterparts. They should be trained to the same standard and receive the same pay and conditions.
- iv A modern Fire Service demands a highly skilled and motivated workforce. FBU members are already committed to these important principles. This should be reflected in a more appropriate and relevant Fire Service National Pay Formula.

We know that these are ambitious targets. But we also know that they are fair and realistic and that the public, who pay our salaries, will support our just claim for decent wages and conditions in exchange for the vital service we provide.

I feel sure that the Annual Conference this month will endorse the Executive Committee's recommendations and that the membership will unite as one behind this bold campaign to change for the better the future prospects of all firefighters. There may well be tough battles ahead. We will do all we can to negotiate, to reach agreement without confrontation. But everything now depends on you, the membership of this campaigning union. Together we will have to show the employers that we mean business. We will need to explain the justice of our case to the public, through the media, national and local, and by direct campaigning. Make no mistake. This vital campaign cannot be won at Head Office. Every brigade, every control room, every station, every watch has a part to play. And should we fail to make satisfactory progress through negotiation then it will be for you to take the struggle to the next stage.



## FIREFIGHTER

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## REVISING THE PAY FORMULA

IT IS imperative that firefighters be properly rewarded. Of course our members deserve to receive more from society than the city broker shifting other people's money around, but we would settle for a new updated Pay Formula which better recognises and reflects our member's efforts to make the UK a safer and better place to live.

Certain principles should apply to any revised Pay Formula. Firstly it must be a genuine national formula, so that firefighters everywhere are paid the rate for the job. There is a case for big town allowances which take into account the increased costs of housing in inner city areas. But to suggest, as some ministers have in recent weeks, that public sector rates should better reflect local labour markets is to go down the wrong road. We've seen the effects of such an approach in the rail industry – fragmentation, bitterness and disputes. We don't want this in the Fire Service. Secondly, the case for Equal Pay is unanswerable – equal pay for control room staff and equal pay for retained firefighters. We all know that the job of a firefighter changed dramatically since the Pay Formula was introduced 20 years ago. Productivity is higher and the range of responsibilities and required skills much broader. These trends will continue and accelerate. But modernisation and change will need to be negotiated, not imposed. And it must be rewarded not taken for granted. It will be impossible to recruit, retain and train staff to the required levels of skill and responsibility on current pay levels. In short there will be no progress in the Fire Service without progress on pay.

Manual work is in decline while professional, managerial and technical occupations are becoming increasingly prevalent in all industries and services. Given the increased emphasis on training and skills, the wider use of new technologies and the broader sense of responsibilities which confronts today's firefighters, surely the reference group for pay should reflect these changes. If for example firefighters were linked to average male earnings (includes technicians, administrators and white collar staff) instead of manual male earnings then we could be £100 per week better off. And who in their right mind would argue that firefighters do not deserve a "risk" differential which would take them into the top quartile of male earnings. In the twenty first century recruitment, retention and modernisation will not come cheap. Neither should it!

ANDY GILCHRIST  
General Secretary



FBU CONFIDENTIAL FREEPHONE HELPLINE

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FAIRNESS AT WORK is about treating others as we would wish to be treated ourselves – with respect

## WHAT'S IT ALL ABOUT?

# Answers for public and politicians

### **Q Why are the Fire Brigades Union asking for a new pay deal?**

A Firefighters and Emergency Fire Control Staff have their pay set by a formula that is a quarter of a century old and doesn't give a fair wage for the job they do today.

### **But surely Firefighters and Emergency Fire Control Staff receive additional pay for working nights, unsocial hours etc?**

Firefighters and Emergency Fire Control Staff receive no shift payments, weekend allowances, or payments for working night shifts unlike the majority of workers who do a shift system.

### **But Firefighters and Emergency Fire Control Staff do get a lot of time off don't they?**

The majority of Firefighters and Emergency Fire Control Staff work the shift below and their working week is set at 42 hours not the 38 or less that is a standard working week in industry.

### **FIREFIGHTERS AND EMERGENCY FIRE CONTROL STAFF WORKING WEEK**

Monday	9am to 6pm	= 9 hours
Tuesday	9am to 6pm	= 9 hours
Wednesday	6pm to 12pm	= 6 hours
Thursday	12pm to 9am, then 6pm to 12pm	= 15 hours
Friday	12pm to 9am	= 9 hours
Saturday & Sunday	Off	

New week starts again on Tuesday moving the whole shift system forward by one day a week.

### **Are Firefighters and Emergency Fire Control Staff often in dispute?**

No. Firefighters and Emergency Fire Control Staff have only ever had one national strike in their history and any dispute since that in 1977 has been over preventing closures of fire stations or the reduction of fire engines, both of which affect public safety.

### **So what exactly does a Firefighter and Emergency Fire Control Staff Members earn?**

A fully qualified firefighter after four complete years of training



will earn £21,531 with the minimum starting pay set at under £17,000. An Emergency Fire Control Staff member earns £19,827 with the minimum starting pay set at £14,163.

### **Isn't £21,531 a fair wage?**

Firefighters have 11% of their wages deducted from their pay for their pension scheme for when they retire at a maximum of 55 or 60 for officers. They also work more hours per week than normal so their hourly pay is in fact lower and so is their take home pay.

### **So is this a campaign exclusively for wholtime Firefighters?**

NO. Pay scales are linked to a Firefighters and this affects Retained, Officer and Emergency Fire Control staff every bit as much as wholtime Firefighters.

### **Wouldn't an extra payment help Firefighters and Emergency Fire Control Staff who cannot afford to live in some areas of the country?**

Firefighters and Emergency Fire Control staff do the same job protecting the public across the country and the risks they face are identical from Cornwall to Scotland. Firefighters and Emergency Fire Control Staff should all be paid a fair rate for the job they do and that job is identical no matter where they serve.

### **Don't some Firefighters and Emergency Fire Control Staff work on their three days off?**

Some Firefighters and Emergency Fire Control Staff do have to work on some of their rest days to earn enough to live where they are sent to work. A fair rate of pay would mean they didn't have to



# 5th COLUMN

work their rest days to make ends meet. Some fire brigades even offer work like this as they know Firefighters and Emergency Fire Control Staff are underpaid.

## ***So Firefighters and Emergency Fire Control Staff employers recognise they are underpaid too?***

Fire Service employers have agreed to a joint approach to the government to ensure Firefighters and Emergency Fire Control Staff are paid fairly for the job they do.

## ***Has the Firefighter's job changed much since their last pay formula claim in 1977?***

Firefighters today face all sorts of incidents from terrorist acts to chemical spills, from car and rail crashes to property fires. Firefighters also undertake safety inspections, do community education programmes for children and adults, and still complete their training courses and exams as well as fitness training and lectures on a daily basis. The training of a Firefighter continues throughout their 30-year career.

## ***How deep does the problem run in the fire service?***

There are Firefighters sleeping on fire station floors and commuting very long distances literally across the country as they cannot afford to live on their wages.

## ***What will Firefighters and Emergency Fire Control Staff do if they don't win their demands?***

Firefighters and Emergency Fire Control Staff believe their call for a fair wage which recognises their skills is long overdue. They have continued to serve the public as dedicated as always but simply cannot afford to carry on as they are. A stockbroker can earn a bonus payment in a single year which would equal the pay of a Firefighter working for 47 years. Firefighters and Emergency Fire Control Staff just want to be treated fairly and don't want to take any industrial action but will if forced to just as they would if public safety is put at risk from station closures for example.

## ***What is a fair rate of pay for Firefighters?***

A rate of pay which recognises that Firefighters have to train for four years to qualify and which reflects a fair wage for people who put their lives on the line and their skills to the test every time they arrive at their stations for another shift.

**WE BELIEVE THAT RATE IS £30,000 for Firefighters and Emergency Fire Control Staff with pay parity for Firefighters working the Retained shift system, who should receive an Annual Retainer of £7,500 and £13.74 for every hour worked.**

## **GLASGOW PUBLIC SUPPORT MORE PAY FOR FIREFIGHTERS AND EMERGENCY FIRE CONTROL STAFF**

In a phone poll in the Glasgow Evening Times on 22 April, 88% of callers backed our claim for £30,000 for Firefighters.

## **SUFFOLK COASTAL DISTRICT COUNCILLORS' RISES TOTAL 1,709%**

Suffolk Coastal District Councillors have, on the advice of an unelected/unaccountable 'quango', been awarded yet another pay rise for the voluntary service/job they do. In real terms, over the last three years, these pay increases for voluntarily looking after the interests of the community, amount to an incredible 1,709% ! Yes, 1,709%. Now if our maths are right, working on the same comparator, we would earn the ludicrous sum of £367,964 per annum. But at least our Councillors are on our side in the campaign for fair pay.

## **PAYOUT FOR FIRE AUTHORITY DUTIES WILL START AT £1,000 A YEAR**

Members of Staffordshire Fire Authority have voted to give themselves an annual allowance for the first time.

The Stoke on Trent and Staffordshire Fire Authority agreed to introduce the Members' Allowance Scheme, which means that all 25 members will now receive the new basic annual allowance of £1,000.

A special responsibility allowance of £9,000 – an increase of £5,500 – will go to the chairman of the authority, Councillor Derek Davis.

The allowance for the vice chairman, who is yet to be elected, will stay the same at £4,000, and a new allowance of £2,000 has been introduced for the major opposition spokesman, councillor Frank Bather.

*Express & Star (Stafford), 28.3.02*

## **MEMBERS OF THE SCOTTISH PARLIAMENT VOTED TO ACCEPT A MASSIVE 13.5% PAY RISE.**

The pay proposal by the Senior Salaries Review Body has linked MSPs salaries to 87.5% of their Westminster colleagues giving them a Pay Formula for the future.

Police officers are currently being asked to accept 6 to 7% whilst Firefighters and Nurses were recently awarded less than 4%.

The focus for us is correct – an improved Pay Formula to keep us at a level of pay commensurate with the value for the job we do and the pay we deserve.

I am sure the Scottish Parliament will give full support to our cause.

Write to THE FIFTH COLUMN, c/o The Editor, The Firefighter, Fire Brigades Union, Bradley House, 68 Coombe Road, Kingston upon Thames, Surrey, KT2 7AE

## FAIR PAY FOR FIREFIGHTERS AND EMERGENCY FIRE CONTROL STAFF

# Why we are worth

**Dean Mills**

**Regional Secretary Southern Region  
and Operational Firefighter for 19 years**

FOR MANY years we were well served by our pay formula. This formula, won after a nine-week strike in 1977 (the first and only time that there has been a national strike in the UK Fire Service), kept us at a level of pay which compared reasonably well with other manual workers. Does that formula still serve us fairly after a quarter of a century?

We are compared for pay to manual workers. Is that a fair description that recognises our skills and the need to train for 4 years until we take the qualified Firefighters exam?

What other group of workers have to train for four years? Lawyers do, Teachers do, Physicists do, but they are hardly manual workers. Why are we classed as such when we also undertake a four-year training programme, much of it on the job and skills based.

For 20 of the last 25 years we have kept pace with the cost of living and pay of other workers, but we cannot carry on as we have been in the last few years, seeing our pay in real terms decline. If we do we will fall back to the position we were in in the early 1970s which led to the strike. We have to look back to ensure we learn from history and don't repeat it.

At a period when we are asked to undertake ever more tasks and expand both what we know and what we can do, it cannot be right that the pay we receive for doing this stagnates.

Our Employers, CACFOA and most importantly the public, recognise we are not paid fairly for the job we do. They recognise we are underpaid; do you agree?

I saw the devastation at the World Trade Centre site in New York a short time after the events of September 11th. I and other

members from the Region stayed with Firefighters at their fire station in Brooklyn. I know if a similar tragedy occurred in the UK we would respond with the same skill, dedication and self-sacrifice as our brothers and sisters in New York. The only difference is in the level of funding and the higher pay they receive.

In the 1950s, the FBU ran a campaign to move away from the spit and polish work which was undertaken. Firefighters quite rightly wanted their job description to reflect their ability. They did not want to simply polish appliances and mop bays. We saw a change then and we have seen many more since. Those changes must be recognised in our pay packets as well as in the newspapers, parliament and on television after we deal with each



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tragedy. Praise doesn't pay the bills!!!

The 1960's saw the FBU fight for a qualified Firefighter's job description and recognition of further skills. The 1970's saw the National Strike and underpayment of Firefighters addressed. The 1980's and 1990's saw us battle year in and year out protecting the public from station closures and appliance removals. Now we see the new century get fully underway and we have another fight on our hands. It will be won as all others have been. Where we have suffered short term set backs, we have grown in the long term.

# £30,000 per year

Where we have fought, we have won. When we stand up for our rights or those of the public, we are successful. Now we need more than ever to be united in our fight for fair pay. This issue directly affects not only you, but also your family. Why should any Firefighter be underpaid?

This fight is for every member of the FBU. Pay for all sections, Retained, Officers or Control is linked to the pay of Firefighters' and when we fight we win for all sections of the fire service and all members of the FBU.

If we don't grasp this fight with both hands now, we will be back to the sort of situation Firefighters faced in the 1970s. At a time when more Firefighters than ever have mortgages and higher

To date this has been gradual and slipping by slowly at first and gathering pace as surely as politicians bend the truth. History and Firefighters on state handouts to make ends meet cannot be repeated, but look at the reality. The cost of living is rising faster than our pay. When do we make a stand? In three years when outgoings exceed income or now?

The Fire Service has changed significantly since I joined in 1983. The job of a firefighter has undergone huge changes since the pay formula was set up in 1977. Just look back over the last five years alone. We have had to adapt to the changes required under TB 1/97. We extended hot fire training; undertook Community Education; saw technological changes to hydraulic cutting

equipment and use; undertook PPV and entry procedure changes. We have to grasp the requirements of defensive, offensive and transitional firefighting. We have seen further skills required for water rescues. We as firefighters have to develop new skills and adapt old ones as the car industry changes design and development of vehicles. Think about how the job of a firefighter has changed in the last few years alone. Mobilising changes, new kit, new equipment. When did a firefighter ever pass a week and not learn something new? We constantly develop new skills and enhance old ones. As our knowledge and ability grows,



**When did a firefighter ever pass a week and not learn something new? As our knowledge and ability grows, why does pay fall in real terms?**

bills to pay, the question is not if we can afford to fight, it is a stark realisation that we cannot afford not to. We will fall further and further behind other workers in real terms if we don't fight now.

Manual jobs have gone; industry which creates them has been decimated. There are fewer manual workers chasing even fewer manual worker vacancies and this leads in turn to a suppression of pay based on simple supply and demand principles. As manual workers pay is suppressed, ours falls when we are compared to them.

why does pay fall in real terms?

We are not asking for a rise of 200-300% as we have seen among councillors in the last few years. We are not asking for the eight-fold increase in pay MPs have seen since 1977. We don't want annual bonuses which would buy us a house as Stockbrokers 'earn'. But we DO want a fair rate of pay for the job we do. Is that really too much to ask?

**FIREFIGHTERS AND EMERGENCY FIRE CONTROL STAFF  
NOT UNDERPAID, NOT OVER PAID, JUST FAIRLY PAID**



## THE FIRE SERVICE PAY FORMULA

AFTER 25 years fire service pay has become once again the burning issue. With overwhelming support from the Fire Brigades Union membership the General Secretary and the Executive Council are set to table a claim for a substantial improvement to the existing rates of pay.

Without a doubt the present rate of pay for the qualified firefighter is far too low and within the next few weeks and months the campaign to address this deficit will gather apace. As the campaign unfolds FBU members in Greater Manchester pause to reflect and whilst the past has definitely not been forgotten the focus is clearly on the future.



**Report by Bob Pounder**

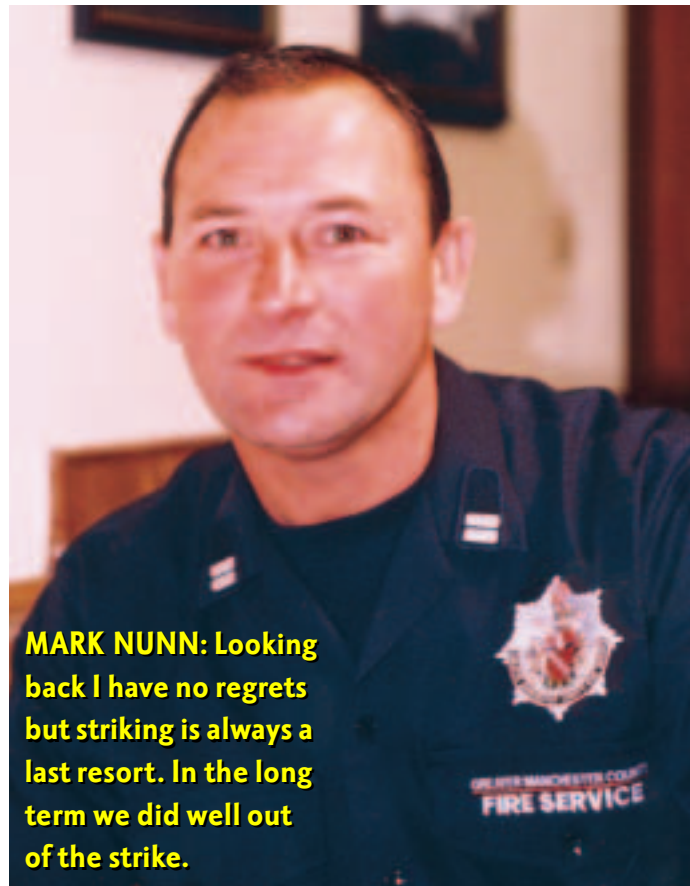
Sub Officer Mark Nunn and Leading firefighter Alan Lonsdale are currently stationed on Green Watch at Ashton-under-Lyne. Both men took part in the 1977 National Strike and remember the nine-week strike when firefighters and control staff fought for a forty-hour week and an immediate increase of thirty percent.

### SUB OFFICER MARK NUNN

Mark Nunn joined the fire service in 1976 when he was eighteen. As a single man still living at home he was cushioned to a certain extent from the effects of low pay within the fire service. He knew however that other firefighters were struggling financially in order to support their families and to pay the mortgages and that this was a problem that had been going on for years.

'We were working the 48 hour week at the time,' Mark recalled. 'We didn't have the shift system we have now. Then we worked the Groups System we either worked three days and two nights or two days and three nights. I worked at Wythenshawe Fire Station. At that time there were seven different groups and you were always working with different people so you never had the stability that you get in the current shift system.'

It was taken for granted that the money wasn't good enough,' explained Mark, 'But a few left rather than go out on strike, a lot of soul searching went on. One of the most annoying things was the actions of NAFO (National Association of Fire Officers). They assisted the Police and the Army by taking them to fires whilst we were locked out and carrying out 24 hour pickets of the fire stations. We even did picket duties over Christmas Day and Christmas Night. I think the Union made a mistake in allowing the Government a week to get the



**MARK NUNN: Looking back I have no regrets but striking is always a last resort. In the long term we did well out of the strike.**

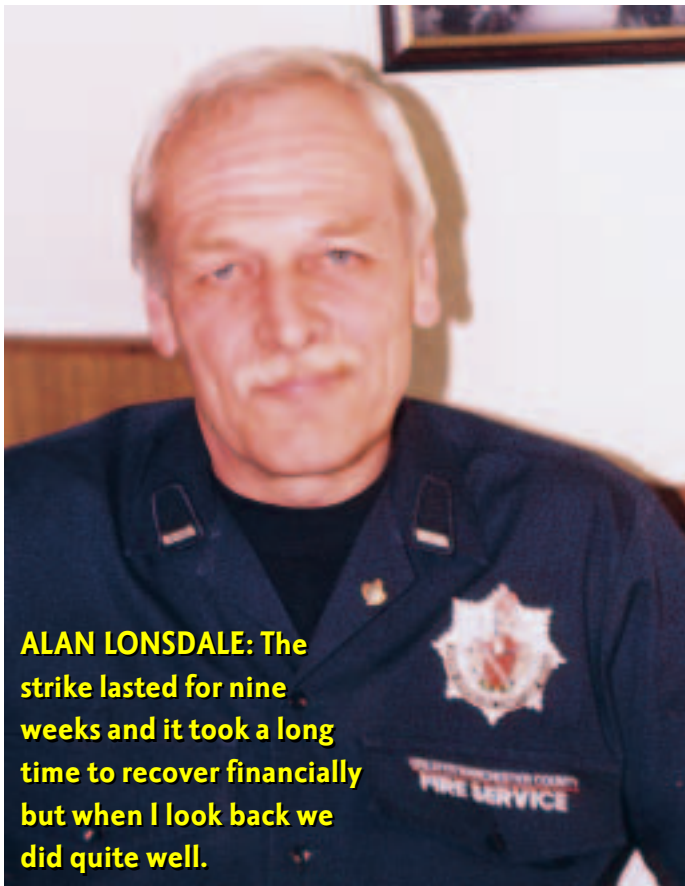
# REMEMBER THE FIGHT FOR THE

Army's Green Goddesses organised. We should have gone out on the seventh of November not the fourteenth.

The strike seemed to drag on but it came to an end for us after a big meeting in Manchester at the Apollo Theatre in the January. Everybody was there and many got up to express their different points of view. Some were for sticking it out others were against. To be honest everybody had had enough so the vote was for a return to work. When we returned to work many refused to work with certain NAFO officers but things move on. Looking back I have no regrets but striking is always a last resort. In the long term we did well out of the strike.

I've heard it mentioned that a pay increase to £30,000 would put us where we deserve to be today. I think that's right if you want a rate





**ALAN LONSDALE:** The strike lasted for nine weeks and it took a long time to recover financially but when I look back we did quite well.



**JILL DRUGGAN:** I know the FBU will be approaching the Employers and the Government with a view to making a substantial pay claim. They've definitely got to go for it because over the years we've lagged behind'

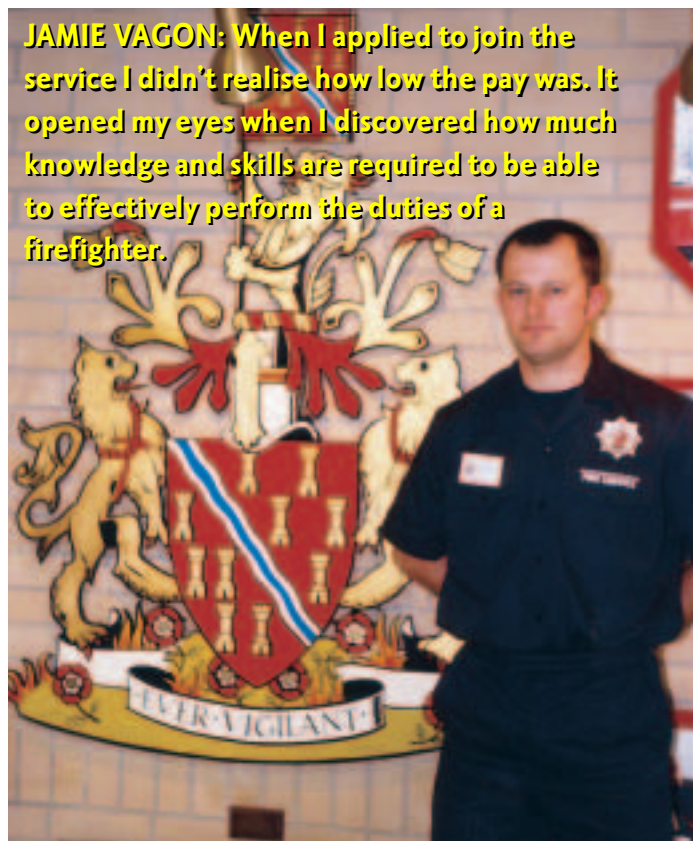
# E PAST – FUTURE

of pay that reflects the technical skills and the level of dedication that is expected of the modern fire service. Nobody can raise a family and pay a mortgage on the current rate of pay (£21,000) the qualified firefighter is expected to live on. The Employers need to consider this and I hope that both they and the Union leadership are able to make the necessary progress.'

## LEADING FIREFIGHTER ALAN LONSDALE

After leaving the Royal Navy at 23 years of age Alan Lonsdale took a drop in pay in order to join the fire service in 1974. After three and a half years as a firefighter his take home pay was £48.00 per week.

**CONTINUED OVER PAGE**



**JAMIE VAGON:** When I applied to join the service I didn't realise how low the pay was. It opened my eyes when I discovered how much knowledge and skills are required to be able to effectively perform the duties of a firefighter.

## THE FIRE SERVICE PAY FORMULA

Hardly enough to pay a mortgage and support a married couple with two school age children.

At the time, explained Alan, 'I was stationed at Blackley (North Manchester) and living in Mossley I had to run an old car because of the number of shifts I was doing at the time. Each shift involved a 20 mile round trip. Before the 1974 overtime ban most firemen overcame the low basic wage by working overtime. I had been the only breadwinner but the basic wage wasn't up to it. Even though we had young kids at the time my wife was eventually forced to work full time as a shop assistant. The days off I had were spent looking after the children so I never seemed to get all the rest I needed. A lot of other members were forced to do other part time work, not to buy luxuries but simply to keep their heads above water. I can remember just prior to the strike there seemed to be a lot of animosity between the younger and older firefighters, a lot of arguing whether or not we should be going out on strike at all.

Speaking personally I didn't think it would happen but it did on November 14, I had just finished the night shift and in the morning just prior to nine o'clock you could have heard a pin drop. As we walked out I thought what do we do now? Once we were out and because the fire stations are so spread out it took a few days before we were anything like organised.

The local union officials said that we could picket the stations nearest to our home addresses, which made things a bit easier. I lived in one of the stone cottage terraces on Manchester Road opposite Mossley Fire Station, which was convenient. But it meant that I was always there, so there was no escape. Also Mossley was a station that was not in a busy town centre and so we didn't receive the donations from the public and small local businesses that other stations may have enjoyed. The Government brought the troops in of course, but I don't recall any animosity between the squaddies and us. They were acting under orders and they had a job to do.

After about four weeks we got locked out of the fire stations and money was in short supply. I had no choice I had to borrow from my parents. The Union arranged for us to visit the local benefits office the Department of Health and Social Security (DHSS) as it was then. I believe the Government made it clear that there was to be no money available for the families of striking firefighters. The visit to the benefits office was a waste of time. I know that when other members went to the DHSS the police were called in.

The strike lasted for nine weeks and it took a long time to recover financially but when I look back we did quite well. The pay formula and the conditions of service we won were a big step forward. But it's time to look at the question of pay again because in recent years we have once again fallen behind in the pay scales.

### GROUP FIRE CONTROL OFFICER JILL DRUGGAN

Jill Druggan has been a member of the Fire Brigades Union for 27 years. She took part in the 1977 National Strike and played her part on the Union's picket line.

'In May 1975, at 18 years of age my first posting was at Area 2

Control London Road, Manchester. The shifts were the same as they are now for control staff, but I remember the 7-group system, the long hours and the low pay of the firefighters.

In November 1977, after much soul searching, I along with many other control staff joined the picket line to fight for better pay for our firefighters and colleagues. I joined the picket line at Crompton Way Fire Station, which is now known as Bolton North. Many of the firefighters who were on the picket line were accompanied by their families. They were definitely struggling financially. The supporting public alleviated this to some extent by gifts of food and cash. I lived at home with my parents at this time. With their support I found I was better able to cope than my workmates, who were married to firemen and had no money coming in.

I also remember the return to work after the strike and the difficulties between staff on all sides, who still held differing views. As time passed things seemed to improve and the resulting pay formula and improvement to conditions made the hardship seem worthwhile.

Looking to the future I know the FBU will be approaching the Employers and the Government with a view to making a substantial pay claim. They've definitely got to go for it because over the years we've lagged behind'.

### FIREFIGHTER JAMIE VAGON

Jamie Vagon is 30 years of age and has just completed basic training including his Breathing Apparatus course at the GMC Training Centre. Previously employed as a fork lift driver by the Heinz food company in Wigan he has taken a pay cut in order to join the fire service. Employed on a short-term contract his basic take-home pay (including seven hours overtime) was £330 per week.

'Some workers are earning up to £600 per week for driving forklift trucks,' said Jamie. 'It is manual labour just moving pallets but it can be boring and monotonous. I wanted to join the Fire Service and have a job with a future. When I applied to join the service I didn't realise how low the pay was. It opened my eyes when I discovered how much knowledge and skills are required to be able to effectively perform the duties of a firefighter. It is also a job that is a lot more hazardous than running a few pallets from A to B.

I have two children; Joe who is ten and my daughter Jessica is just six. As a firefighter I want to make a secure future for my family. My wife has a full time job but she would like to reduce her hours in order to spend a bit more time with the children.

I haven't worked as an operational firefighter yet but I do know that our National Conditions of Service are something that we must hold on to at all costs. My Grandfather was in the Fire Service many years ago. He worked long hours at the fire station in Wigan and on his days off had to do part time work, cleaning windows in order to make ends meet for his family. That's not the kind of future that I have in mind and as a new member of the Fire Brigades Union I want to play my part in achieving the levels of pay that we all deserve. I want to enjoy quality time with my children and to meet their expectations as they grow up in today's society'.

# MERSEYSIDE FIRE AUTHORITY SUGGESTS JOINT APPROACH

Dear Mr Gilchrist

I have been asked by the Chair of the Authority, Peter Dowd, to write on behalf of this Authority to express our view about the FBU National Pay Campaign.

This Authority recognises that the existing pay formula has served both firefighters and Fire Authorities well for over 20 years and salaries for firefighters and Fire Control Operators have improved in line with those of skilled manual workers. However, we equally support the view that the commitment and enthusiasm of firefighters in taking on board new and demanding roles, has led to the current situation where the current pay formula does not appear to meet the demands of a modern fire and rescue service.

The approach of Merseyside firefighters to delivering a whole range of fire safety initiatives, whilst at the same time continuing with their highly professional firefighting and rescue skills, is a good example of how firefighters have positively responded to demands that have been placed upon them.

We therefore would wish to express our support for a positive approach by the National Joint Council, in partnership with the FBU, to delivering a new pay scheme that builds on the strengths of the pay formula, i.e. security and stability of pay negotiation, yet recognises the imbalance of the present.

I know that the FBU have some concerns about the debate about pay becoming focused on changes in working conditions in return for improved pay. This Authority shares this concern.

We believe that the existing procedures are capable of delivering a modernised fire service, and we would not support a piecemeal approach to relatively minor elements of conditions of service. We believe there is a danger of becoming 'bogged down', by relatively minor issues, when the 'big picture' is relatively clear.

This Authority is committed to the collective bargaining process and will work with colleagues in the NJC and in Government, to seek a positive change in pay that continues to ensure that firefighters are properly paid and the fire service delivers high quality firefighting, rescue and safety services to the public.

There is, of course, a fundamental issue of the affordability of such an approach to improve pay and addressing the pay issue. This year alone, this Authority faced a £4.1 million budget deficit, which forces elected members into taking some difficult decisions. The scale at which pay needs to be addressed, will require a significant increase in financial support to the Fire Service. In relation to this difficult issue, we believe that the means exist within the Government to take forward a joint approach between the FBU and employers, to seek proper recognition and reward of the change in firefighter and control staff roles, both now and in the future.

**A J McGuirk**

**Acting Chief Fire Officer, Merseyside Fire Service**

# STILL WAITING FOR REPLY FROM Mr BLAIR

Dear Firefighter

Please find enclosed a letter I have recently sent to Mr. Tony Blair regarding Firefighters' pay. I am still waiting for a reply.

**Geoffrey Etheridge**

Dear Mr. Blair,

After the sad and tragic events of September 11th and the death of 343 Firefighters, I felt it appropriate to write to you regarding the pay structure of Firefighters in the UK.

As you are no doubt aware the role of a Firefighter in the UK can take many forms along with many risks, as does the Police Service who in turn receive a much higher remuneration than those in the Fire Service, along with a London Weighting Allowance.

How is it deemed fair that the Police Service receives a London Weighting Allowance that is double that of the Fire Service, for living in the same areas and incurring the same costs of living?

Many firefighters also have second jobs in order to subsidise living in general. The occurrence of a major incident in the UK would be devastating due to the low morale and energy levels of these Firefighters.

We are deemed to be some of the best in the world and yet there is no reflection in the annual sum we receive for doing this job.

*In the USA we are seen as heroes. Please tell me what can be thought of us in our own country when our employer and government are unable to reflect the work we do and the risks we take in our annual remuneration.*

*Like you Mr. Blair, I have children. Why is it that after I have finished my tour of duty that I then have to start another job in order to provide enough for my family, as do many other Firefighters. Why is it Mr. Blair that other countries both in and out of the European Union, honour and respect the bravery and loyalty of their Firefighters when a prominent country such as the UK is unable to do the same?*

*How can you justify that one of the services in place to protect and serve the UK is unjustly rewarded? All that these men and women require is enough money to live comfortably, support themselves and their families and do their job with the bravery, loyalty and effort that is required of them when time and time again they do not fail to provide such an effective service.*

*Please Mr. Blair, tell the UK's Firefighters how you cost the saving of lives? Something that may be required of us every day. I have forwarded a copy of this letter to all of the UK's National newspapers, along with the Fire Brigades Union, and I eagerly await your response.*

**Yours sincerely,**

**Firefighter Geoffrey Etheridge (23 years service)**



**THE FIRE SERVICE PAY FORMULA AND THE NATIONAL CONDITIONS OF**

# Why the FBU should



**Bob Pounder**  
GMC Brigade Secretary

## EXECUTIVE COUNCIL STATEMENT 2001

The Executive Council's statement on fire service pay accepted at last years annual conference read: "Historically the formula has served us well. There is however a growing feeling among members that the increasingly skilled nature of both firefighters and emergency fire control operator's jobs coupled with an increasing workload and decreasing levels of staff should be reflected in their pay packets".

## BACK TO THE PAST

The struggle for an acceptable pay formula can be traced back to the 1950s and the campaign for the 40-hour week was actually raised by the FBU when the 72-hour week was standard in most brigades. In London the union managed to negotiate the 60-hour week in 1939 and it was set to be implemented from January 1, 1940. However, the Second World War soon put an end to that and under the National Fire Service firefighters were all working the 112-hour week by 1942.

The end of the war saw the election of the 1945 Labour Government, and in 1946 the 60-hour week was finally introduced for firefighters. Two years later the service was de-nationalised and returned to the county boroughs. Many local authorities were resentful of having to fund the improved conditions that firefighters had been receiving under the NFS and in some cases responded by extending the hours of duty by up to 84 hours per week. Not content with this, police pay parity was irrevocably lost when in 1951 the employers awarded firefighters an annual pay rise of seven shillings and sixpence (three half crowns) against fifteen shillings to the police.

## THE 1951 SPIT & POLISH DEMONSTRATIONS

Firefighters whose hours of duty were at least 60 compared with 48 for those of the police expressed their anger for the first time. FBU members took unofficial action and official industrial action, in what

became known as the spit and polish demonstrations, in essence, emergency calls only action. The employers were determined to stamp out this unprecedented industrial action within the Fire Service. Throughout the country hundreds of firemen were fined, demoted and even sacked. In some instances the police ejected them from their stations. This was carried out in spite of mounting public opposition to the employers tactics of seeing men suspended and appliances taken off the run in an effort to beat the FBU.

The anti-union offensive had to be called off, when three days before Christmas, a massive fire occurred at the Broad Street goods depot in London and a collapsing wall crushed three firefighters to death and injured another 12. Sadly the three dead men were still facing disciplinary charges arising from the spit and polish demonstrations. The employers relented, fines were repaid firefighters reinstated and demotions rescinded: eventually.

## THE SERVICE OF THE SIXTIES

In spite of these set backs, the union went forward by launching its Service for the Sixties campaign at the annual conference in Rothesay in 1960. The Service of the Sixties campaign was essentially aimed at modernising the fire service but it also managed to achieve the forty-eight hour week for the majority of firefighters.

This improvement was again reversed when in 1966 the Wilson Government announced a pay standstill. Although a pay deal was achieved for the fire service in 1967 it came at a price, the return of the 56-hour week or the eight-hour bonus shift system.

By 1973, Glasgow firefighters who had not agreed to the 56-hour week or the bonus shift system, attempted to negotiate from their local authority, a 'local plus agreement' of £5.00 per week, they were only offered £2.45. Consequently a ten-day unofficial strike action took place. This strike strengthened the union's negotiating position at national level. A pay deal worth £7.80 was achieved and the introduction of the forty eight-hour week within twelve months was also included.

## THE 1977 NATIONAL STRIKE

At the 1974 annual conference the campaign for the forty-hour week was launched and a ban on shift overtime was accepted so that the employers could no longer undermine the 48-hour week. These were difficult years in which the union's claim for a forty hour week came to nothing. They were years also, of high inflation, between 1974 and 1977 the real earnings of firefighters had declined by over 15 per cent. The national average wage of male workers in 1977 was £78.60 for a basic 42-hour week. Firefighters were £12.90 below these average earnings for a 48-hour week. The average firefighter's take home pay was £46.71. Many union



## SERVICE

# claim £30,000



members were in receipt of Family Income Supplement (FIS) and their children were entitled to free school meals.

In 1977 and on the basis of the newly published 'The Qualified Fireman's Job' endorsed by the NJC, the union tabled a 30 per cent pay claim which was not compatible with the Government's imposed pay limit of 10 per cent. Consequently, a Recall Conference in Eastbourne on November 7, 1977 voted by a two to one majority for strike action. On November 14 1977, the FBU embarked on its first national strike. This strike lasted for nine weeks, and though not immediately successful saw the introduction of the pay formula and the 42-hour week established by 1979.

With little exception the conditions of service achieved almost 25 years ago still prevail. Whatever the shortcomings of the pay formula in recent years, compared to many areas of the beleaguered and privatised public sector our fire service conditions of service remain second to none. Past FBU members fought to achieve these conditions of service. The current shift and duty systems are the inheritance enjoyed by FBU members today. It is the legacy of a union that was truly 'forged in fire'.

## THE EMPLOYERS CONTINUING OFFENSIVE

The ink had hardly dried on the fire service pay formula and the 42-hour week before the employers once again went on to the offensive when they published the 1980 Green Paper on the Fire Service aimed at reducing fire service jobs and standards of fire cover. In the last 23 years the Union has had to fight to defend standards of fire cover, to defend the pay formula and other national conditions of service.

The employer's agenda was made clear once again in 1995, through the Audit Commission's, 'In the Line of Fire' report. Between 1998 and 1999 the objectives of this report were made explicit through the employers ten point (smash & grab) plan. This plan included the introduction of 'single status' the reduction of overtime payments, reduced subsistence allowances, reductions

to extra-statutory leave and sick leave payments and the ending of NHS reimbursements. Further to this there were proposals to increase the working week for those employed on the Day Duty system and to introduce 'capability' and performance related pay. More fundamentally the employers' intended coup de grace rested on their proposal to introduce local flexibility by closing down the national negotiating machinery.

In spite of the much-vaunted 'partnership' approach extolled by the so-called modernisers of today, the employer's real agenda has never been far from the surface. The recent Merseyside debacle for example under Chief Fire Officer Saunders was for the employers an experiment that failed. In essence Mr Saunders attempted to introduce a two-tier entry system into the Merseyside brigade. For the employers this still remains an agenda item and is reflected in their recent 'Managing the Modernised Fire Service' document (May 2001). The Chief Fire Officer's failure to score a 'first' on Merseyside is a tribute to the combative Merseyside FBU. Pack your trunk Chief indeed!

Similarly, Chief Fire Officers towards the end of the 1950's had also espoused the elitism of two-tier entry when they advocated the creation of an officer cadet force. They argued that the normal recruitment of firefighters was not capable of producing officer material for the fire service but the union's 'Service for the Sixties Campaign' soon put paid to that.

To date the employers have never been able to wrest the gains of the past from the FBU membership simply because all of these gains are the key in an uncertain world, to security and a way of life that if let go would be irretrievably lost.

## A SIGNIFICANT WAGE IMPROVEMENT

The General Secretary was speaking for the union when he recently announced that, "Basic rates for qualified fire-fighters are now far too low and simply do not adequately measure the contributions our members make to society". He went on to say, "We know from past experience that advances in pay will not be readily conceded. It will be a struggle but with your support the union can secure significant improvements to the salaries, wages and conditions of all firefighters and related staff". (Firefighter January/February 2002)

At a time when many FBU members qualify for family credit, and when some front line firefighters are earning less than £17,000 per year this is a sentiment that can be readily endorsed.

Besides if as the Daily Mirror reported (March 14, 2002) Lord Browne the chief executive of BP currently enjoys a salary of £50.00 a minute perhaps an annual salary of £30,000 is not too much for the qualified firefighter to ask.

**PAY CAMPAIGN 2002**

# Why a pay campaign now?



**Tony Maguire**  
Regional Secretary  
Region 2,  
Northern Ireland

FOLLOWING a series of resolutions on pay to Annual Conference, including a number over recent years from Northern Ireland, the Executive Council submitted "The Executive Council Statement Fire Service Pay Formula" to Conference 2001. This statement was endorsed by that Conference and set in motion the present campaign aimed at improving the pay of ALL members of the FBU.

## WHAT'S WRONG WITH THE PAY FORMULA?

In embarking on that campaign the FBU recognises that the pay formula won by the 1977 strike has helped maintain industrial peace in the Service and has served us well in past years. That strike led to the present 42 hour week, the creation of "green watch" and more than 6,000 jobs, occupied by many of you reading this circular! The pay formula prevented the annual bun fight for a wage increase inherent in the free collective bargaining approach and ensured that the real wages of firefighters and control room staff improved steadily in line with those of skilled manual workers in the private sector. However, our annual pay rise was linked to movements in the earnings of the upper quartile of manual workers, the manufacturing base of the nation. These workers were, for the most part, Unionised and commanded decent wage rises. But because of economic factors such as world recessions and the cheaper cost of labour in developing countries, that industrial base no longer exists in Great Britain and therefore, we are linked to a sector which no longer yields the pay increases necessary to ensure that FBU members maintain a decent lifestyle into the 21st century.

The 1977 Pay Formula was never intended to last more than a few years at most! It has however lasted until the present day. Poor wage increases in recent years only underline the urgent need for the whole issue of pay to be revisited.

## WHY DO WE NEED A PAY RISE?

It must be emphasised that a pay formula in itself is not the problem. The Union would seek to maintain a pay formula, but firmly believe that the present level of the Qualified Firefighters pay does not adequately reward the range of duties performed by

modern day firefighters and control staff, nor reflects the scope of skills and abilities necessary to do the work! The range of duties and the technical skills required are far in excess of those expected from our members in 1977. Our job and workload have increased immensely during that time, but the means of determining our pay has remained the same. The FBU are now challenging that anomaly.

## WHAT ABOUT CONTROL STAFF AND RETAINED?

The FBU believes that 92% of a Qualified Firefighters pay does not reflect the value of the work performed by our control members and do not believe that this differential is any longer sustainable, if it ever was!

It has been the FBU's long-standing policy that the differential between a wholetime and retained hourly rate does not make sense. Having consulted with our National Retained Committee, we are claiming parity in the hourly rate for Retained members. This is presently £13.74. In addition we are claiming a retaining fee of £7,500! We believe that this remuneration recognises the skill, commitment and dedication of our retained colleagues. The principled stance must be that of improved pay for all of our members, including control staff and retained! Their pay must be brought into line with that of wholetime members. All of our members deserve a living wage!

This Pay campaign will be framed around four main elements:

- The Pay Formula itself.
- The level of the Qualified Firefighters pay.\*
- Parity for Control Staff.
- A rate for the Retained based on value to the community and fairness.

*\* The Qualified Firefighters pay is quoted for reference only. In principle this would mean an improvement in pay for all members in all ranks and sections.*

## WHAT ARE OUR EMPLOYERS SAYING ABOUT THIS?

Our National Employers have been apprised of the membership's demands for a better way of determining pay at meetings of both the full National Joint Council and at the NJC Standing Committee. It must be an indicator of the rightness of our case that the employers agree that we are not adequately rewarded for the service that we deliver! They have offered to join with the union in a JOINT representation to the Treasury in an effort to secure the funding necessary. In addition, Dr. Alan Whitehead, Minister responsible for the Fire Service at the DTLR has agreed to take part in that joint approach.

## SO, A PAY INCREASE IS INEVITABLE!

No! Whilst we have the tacit support of our employers and the Minister, the release of funds from the Treasury is not automatic. The FBU have factored this into our strategy and our response to a



refusal by the Treasury will be dictated by the wishes of the membership. You, the member will indicate to the leadership

- Whether we deserve a pay rise.
- Whether we want a pay rise.
- Whether we accept a refusal from the Treasury.

### SO FAR SO GOOD, WHAT'S IN IT FOR THE EMPLOYERS?

Our employers, like any employers have an agenda of their own. That agenda is not a secret. They have tabled a list of areas which they want to see progress on. It is important to understand that their "modernisation agenda" was there before our pay campaign, and equally important to understand that that agenda would be there anyway, regardless of any pay claim. They wish to see progress on issues such as:

- The Fire Cover Review.
- The Rank Structure Review.
- The Integrated Personal Development System.
- Community Fire Safety.
- Best Value.
- Equality agenda.
- Retained Agenda.

The Union acknowledges that scope exists for progress within this agenda, and notes carefully that National Conditions of Service do not form any part of the bargaining agenda. Our position for now will be:

- There will be no progress on modernisation without progress on pay!

### WILL I HAVE TO GO ON STRIKE?

It is the Union's stated intention that the 1977 strike should remain the only national strike in our history,

The Union nationally and locally will do all in its power to ensure that this remains the case. But only you, the membership will decide what actions will be necessary to progress the pay claim.

If it is the choice of the membership, then the pay campaign will end having delivered nothing!

However, if it is the choice of the membership, that better pay is to be achieved through negotiation, and if necessary industrial action, then the Union will proceed with that campaign!

### HOW MUCH WILL WE GET?

The Executive Council is recommending we demand £30,000 for Firefighters and Emergency Fire Control Staff and £13.74 per hour with a retainer of £7,500 per year for Firefighters working the

Retained Shift System.

The Executive Council are also demanding that the existing differentials for Officers remain.

All members should understand that any increase in pay will be reflected in future pension calculations as ours is a final salary based scheme. There are implications for all members present and future.

### WHAT HAPPENS NEXT?

The Executive Council are preparing an Emergency Resolution to Annual Conference in Bridlington on Wednesday 15 May. The pay debate starts at 2.00pm. All FBU members are welcome to attend to listen to the debate.

Members should ensure they have discussed the resolution at their Branch meetings and mandated their delegates to Annual Conference with their views on the campaign.

The strategy beyond May 2002 will be determined by Conference and if necessary a recall of that Conference as required.

### WHAT SHOULD I DO AS AN ORDINARY MEMBER?

The most important thing you should do is be honest with your FBU officials. They will provide the leadership, but sometimes leaders have to look over their shoulders to see who is behind them! If you believe that you are adequately paid or if you feel that you are not adequately paid but are not prepared to do anything about it you must indicate this to your FBU representatives. However, it should be emphasised that the overwhelming majority of members who have been spoken to so far are indicating that they are up for whatever it takes to secure a decent living!

It must be clear to all members that the surest way of ensuring employers attack our most valued conditions of service is by showing weakness at this time. Whatever happens next, we will not stand still!

We will either take a step forward collectively through strength and conviction, or a backward step with all of the inevitable consequences that that will bring!

There are firefighters in Brigades in receipt of benefits to supplement their inadequate incomes. In the opinion of your officials this is an absolute disgrace in the 21st century!

If we do not sort out this pay issue now we will have to do it another time. It is a historical fact that working people have only ever improved their lot by collective action. If you really believe that you are going to sustain your present standard of living over coming years with our present method of pay, I must tell you that all indications are to the contrary. In addition, no one is going to achieve an improvement for us other than ourselves through unity in the FBU.

The Campaign has started. The best chance of success lies in unity and tight discipline at all levels of the membership.

It is an absolute truism that if we do nothing we will surely lose, but if we do something ... we just might win!

Your Union will keep you appraised of future developments as soon as is humanly possible.



# NOTICEBOARD

## MAKE SURE YOUR BRANCH DISCUSSES THE FOLLOWING RESOLUTION PRIOR TO ANNUAL CONFERENCE

### Executive Council Emergency Resolution to Annual Conference 2002

The Fire Brigades Union Executive Council acknowledges the historical benefits of the Fire Service National Pay Formula in maintaining a reasonable level of wages for Fire Service personnel.

However since the 1980s, the characteristics of the UK labour force have changed considerably. This has resulted in a significant decline in the manufacturing sector which has made the Fire Service National Pay Formula less effective in delivering a reasonable living wage to those who render a vital emergency public service to our communities. Simultaneously the jobs of Firefighters and Emergency Fire Control Staff have become increasingly complex and skilled and this should be reflected in their wages.

The Executive Council commissioned a report from the Labour Research Department on the Fire Service National Pay Formula which was received in April 2002. The report comprehensively endorsed the above points.

After widespread consultation, careful consideration and taking full account of the LRD report the Executive Council are recommending to this Annual Conference that we mount a vigorous campaign in pursuit of a fair wage for Firefighters and Emergency Fire Control Staff. This should include:

- i. An improvement in the basic pay for Firefighters to £30,000 by November 2002. Existing differentials across rank structures should continue to apply pending the outcome of the Rank Structure Review.
- ii. As a trade union committed to equality and fair treatment for all members and in recognition of their pivotal role Emergency Fire Control Staff to receive the same wages as Firefighters of their equivalent rank.
- iii. Firefighters working the Retained and Volunteer Duty Systems can be expected to do the same job as their Wholetime counterparts. They should be trained to the same standard and receive the same pay and conditions.
- iv. A modern Fire Service demands a highly skilled and motivated workforce. FBU members are already committed to these important principles. This should be reflected in a more appropriate and relevant Fire Service National Pay Formula.

The Executive Council believe that the above points reflect the FBU's commitment to modernising the Service. It is our wish to pursue and resolve these issues in negotiations with our Employers. It is our express wish to avoid confrontation. If however this is not possible, then the Executive Council will recall Conference and recommend that members take strike action in pursuit of a fair wage for Firefighters and Emergency Fire Control Staff.

**UNITE TO FIGHT  
FOR A PAY  
THAT'S RIGHT!**

## MODEL RESOLUTION

**This Branch supports the stance of the General Secretary and the Executive Council in that the current rate of pay for the Qualified Firefighter is far too low. To this end we call on the national leadership to seek, unconditionally, a substantial increase in pay that will properly reflect the real value ascribed to Firefighters and Fire Control Staff. In endorsing this claim this Branch will support, if necessary, a ballot for industrial action.**

**Passed by 39 (out of 41) Branches  
in GREATER MANCHESTER Brigades**

## BASILDON BRANCH RESOLUTION

**This Branch supports the National Campaign for the provision of a substantial, unconditional pay increase for Firefighters, the modernisation of the Pay Formula and pay parity for Control Room staff and for Retained Firefighters.**

**This Branch resolves to take all necessary steps to bring about a successful conclusion for all members in this campaign.**

## WOMEN'S SCHOOL 2002

**This Women's School 2002 will take any action necessary to achieve the aims of this pay campaign.**

**Unanimously passed at  
National Women's School 2002**